

The Sleeping Beauty Raid

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Summary: Troy and his team join Saunders and his team for another go at the Germans with trickery and slingshots.

1. Chapter 1

****The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 1****

By: AliasCWN

King Company, 2nd platoon, 1st squad shuffled into camp tired, hungry and ready for the promised rest period. The other squads of K company called greetings as they plodded past.

"Hey Sarge!" Kirby, the squads B.A.R. man called to his squad leader. "How come we get all the patrols while these other guys get to lay around and sleep?"

Sargent Chip Saunders paused at the head of the squad to consider the question.

"Probably because no one wants to sit around camp and listen to you complain. They'd rather send you, and us, out so that they can get a break." The sargent didn't wait for the argument he knew his answer would generate.

"Then why don't they get out of camp and let us sleep for once?" Kirby grunted with exhaustion. The steady string of patrols had everyone worn out. He didn't even have the energy to give his sargent his usual hard time.

"Let it go my friend. We have a rest period coming and I plan to spend the whole time sleeping." Cage, the squads scout, passed Kirby and hurried to a spot that was protected from the cool breeze. He threw his bedroll on the ground and fell in a heap on top of it.

"Everybody get some rest." Saunders called as he dropped his own bedroll. Shrugging out of his pack, he dropped that next to his weapon which he had propped against a stone wall. He slumped to the ground and leaned his head against the wall. Even the thought of food could not keep his eyes from drifting shut.

"Sargent Saunders?"

Chips eyes popped open at the sound of Lt. Gil Hanleys' call. One of the men pointed to the sargent at the lieutenants request. Gil picked his way through discarded packs to stand over Chip.

"Headquarters wants to see us."

Saunders didn't rise, he just tilted his head to look up at the officer. "Well Lieutenant, what has headquarters dreamed up for us to do this time?"

"You're not going to believe it." The lieutenant said quietly as he squatted next to the sargent. "We are to report for a briefing as soon as possible." He continued in a louder voice for the benefit of the men.

Chip raised his eyebrows in a silent question. He could already feel the tiredness slipping away. "That bad huh?"

The lieutenant frowned and stood. "Are you ready? They're waiting for us."

Saunders shrugged and climbed to his feet. He tried not to stagger with fatigue as he hurried to keep up with the lieutenants longer stride.

"Well there goes our rest period." Kirby said to no one in particular.

The others agreed and decided to get some sleep before the sargent returned.

The approach of a jeep woke them a few hours later. Most stirred but no one wanted to move before it was necessary. Sargent Saunders hopped out of the jeep and began unloading a pile of blankets, rations and spare packs. He left the pile where it fell and headed directly for his own bedroll. With a thud and a grunt he landed on top of the blanket. His soft snores sounded almost immediately. The squad exchanged puzzled looks.

Littlejohn got up and walked over to the pile. He stared down at the supplies without speaking.

"What is it Littlejohn?" Billy Nelson called from his own bed.

The big man shrugged and tucked his hands in his pockets. "Looks like Sarge is hungry and cold. He even got extra packs to carry his extra supplies." With another shrug the private returned to his own bedroll, curled up in his blanket, and fell back asleep. His snores joined that of the sergeants.

The others shrugged too and soon there was a whole chorus of snores.

Most of the squad was awake when Saunders opened his eyes. He stretched and rolled out of his blanket. All eyes immediately turned to him.

"Well?" Cage finally ask the question everyone had on their minds.

"Well what?"

"When do we go out again?"

There was some grumbling at the question but everyone waited for the answer.

"Two days. Tomorrow we rest. We leave bright and early the next day." Saunders looked at the men facing him. All looked tired, but he didn't see any danger signs that any of them had been pushed too far. Headquarters had been adamant, no one was to go who might crack under the strain. This mission was too important to risk someone losing it and blowing the entire operation.

"That's not as bad as I expected." The Cajun admitted with relief. "Did they already assign us our next patrol?"

"They did." Saunders admitted. "I'm hungry. I'm going to head over to the mess hall and get something to eat. I'll see you guys later." Saunders started to walk away. "If you've had some sleep, make sure your packs and supplies are full. Pick up extra ammo too. Then get some more sleep." He gave them their orders before walking away. They all stared after him as he left camp for the mess hall.

"I don't think I like the sound of that." Littlejohn spoke softly as he watched the sargent leave. Billy, standing next to him, nodded in agreement.

Kirbys 'I told you so' was ignored by everyone.

Their packs were resupplied and stocked full by the time the sargent returned to the camp.

He didn't explain any further and no one ask.

2. Chapter 2

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 2

The next day found the squad sitting around camp speculating about the extra gear.

"We probably have some new replacements coming in. Sarge can't carry all those packs by himself." Billy Nelson suggested.

"Replacements bring their own gear." Littlejohn scoffed. "When did Sarge ever get any gear for the new guys?"

"It could be replacements." Billy insisted. "You usually know what's going on Cage."

Cage just waved a hand at them. "Don't drag me into this. Sarge will tell us when we need to know."

"Don't you want to know?" Billy peered at age from his seat beside Littlejohn. "Aren't you even a little bit curious?"

"Nope." Cage lied. "I've found that where the army is concerned, it's usually better not to know."

"Now you sound like Kirby." Sawyer joined the conversation. "Maybe you're right though. Maybe we're better off not knowing."

"We're going to find out sooner or later. Me, I prefer to know sooner." Kirby was impatient with the others. "Don't any of you care?"

"You care so much, you go ask the Sarge." Cage told his friend. "Me, I think I'll wait until he's ready to tell us."

They watched as Saunders got up and left the camp. He returned a short time later with more supplies which he stashed in his own pack. He looked up at everyone watching him.

"Did everyone restock their supplies?"

They all nodded.

"Then relax." The sargent suggested. "There's a truck coming in later today. We've got four more men joining us on this assignment. It may be a tough one so get all the rest you can."

"I have a bad feeling about this." Kirby grumbled as Saunders left them with even more unanswered questions. "It just keeps getting stranger and stranger."

No one could refute his observation so they allowed him to get in the last word. Most of them spent the better part of the day going over their gear and napping.

They were all on their feet and standing together later that afternoon when the truck arrived.

Gil Hanley climbed out of the passenger seat and walked around the back as Chip Saunders crawled over the tail gate.

"What did you bring us L.T.?" Kirby called.

"Didn't the sargent tell you?" The lieutenant looked at the sargent in surprise.

"Nope. I didn't want to spoil the surprise." The sargent was smiling. "We brought the new men." He turned to his squad and watched their faces.

"Where are they?" Littlejohn ask when no one appeared.

"Sleeping. They had a long trip." Saunders answered.

"Jeez Sarge! How is it that every time HQ sends us new men, they're sleeping?" He looked at his friends for support. "Remember those last

guys they sent us? They were asleep when they arrived too. How come we don't get to sleep?"

"You had all last night and today to sleep Kirby. If you're still tired, go back to sleep. We leave tomorrow morning." Saunders pulled the canvas aside.

"I wonder how those guys are doing?" Cage spoke in a quiet voice.

"Why don't you ask them?"

Sargent Sam Troy appeared at the tail gate. He grinned down at the squad before he jumped to the ground. "For your information private," he eyed Kirby, "my men are awake. I think you woke them." His tone didn't suggest that he had taken any offense at Kirby's words. "So no one told you we were coming?" He laughed. "That's alright, we like to surprise everyone." He turned to Saunders. "Don't tell me, they don't want to work with us again."

Saunders shrugged. "I didn't ask them." He glanced over at his men. "But they don't look too upset at the idea."

"You're right, they do look friendly." Troy called into the back of the truck. "You can come out now."

Sargent Moffitt appeared next. "Sam's right. They do appear friendly. At least he doesn't appear to have any new holes in him." His eyes twinkled with pleasure as he surveyed the group of men. There was the sound of something heavy being pushed across the floor of the truck. Moffitt followed Troy to the ground and turned to reach for something behind him. He retrieved a package and stepped out of the way as another form appeared out of the gloom of the truck. Hitchcock slid out onto the ground behind Moffitt.

"Do you guys ever do anything besides sleep?" Cage called with a smile.

"Well, now that you ask, we do get drunk now and then." The squad laughed as he turned to pull a heavy box off the tail gate. "But this time we come bearing gifts." He swung the box around so that they could see the bottles of beer packed inside. Tully pushed a second box to the edge and jumped down.

Kirby laughed at the sight. "If you're trying to get us drunk enough to want to work with you againâ€¦" Kirby took the box from the blond, "I'd say you're off to a good start."

Saunders grinned at Troy. "It's a start."

"Well," Moffitt smiled as he opened the package in his hands, "maybe these will help." He held up two unopened bottles of Scotch.

"It doesn't hurt." Saunders laughed again as Hanley nodded his head.

3. Chapter 3

****The Sleeping Beauty Raid**-Chapter 3**

"We're going to do what?" Chip Saunders stood face to face with Gil Hanley. "I don't believe this!"

"Those are our orders. Sgt. Troy and his men have accepted the assignment. They're working out the final details now. Our job is to help them in any way that we can." Gil faced Chip without flinching. "We have our orders Sargent." His voice softened. "All we can do is help to the best of our ability. This mission will happen with or without us. They ask for us. We've built a trusting working relationship with them."

Chip shook his head in frustration. "This is one crazy war."

"Troy did say that his man thinks crazy works for them. Remember?"

Chip laughed at the memory. Littlejohn had ask if the team was crazy and Troy had told him Pvt. Pettigrews' view on the matter. "Okay, we have our orders. We'll be ready." He was still shaking his head at the plan when Troy and his men returned.

They climbed out of the jeep and unloaded several bundles. Troy ordered his men to stash the bundles somewhere safe. The privates took them away as the sergeants stood talking in low tones. When they noticed him, Troy motioned him over. Saunders went reluctantly.

"Something wrong Sargent?" Moffitt had noticed his lack of enthusiasm.

"Are you guys sure about this?" Chip couldn't keep his reservations to himself.

Moffitt smiled. "I take it that Lt. Hanley filled you in on the details of the plan?"

"Yeah he did, and it sounds crazy."

"Just crazy enough to have half a chance of working." Troy added. "We wouldn't be going if we didn't think it had a chance."

"Half a chance." Saunders repeated Troys' own words back to him.

Troy shrugged. "Don't you ever take risks for a good cause?"

"When I have orders. One of the first things I learned in the army was to never volunteer for anything."

Moffitt and Troy exchanged grins. "This assignment is voluntary on your part too. All you have to do is say that you don't want it and we'll ask for someone else."

"Just try and back out now. You ask for us, remember?"

Troy nodded with a smile. "I remember." He didn't mention that Saunders had specifically told him to ask for them if he were ever back their way. "It's not as bad as it sounds. We worked out a lot of the details with headquarters and G-2. The thing is, just like the

last one, there is a strict time line we have to follow. We need to move out of here early tomorrow morning. There's an ambulance we need to catch."

Saunders nodded. "Okay, let's do this."

The privates had joined the rest of the squad. The sergeants joined them, their discussion ended in favor of other topics. Pettigrew was entertaining the crew with a story about how he and the young blond had been captured.

"And this Captain Ginter wanted to interrogate us. We had to stall for time so Hitch volunteered to answer all his questions. I'll tell you, by the time Hitch got done 'helping', that kraut didn't know which way was up." Tully began to repeat the contents of the interrogation as best he could remember them. The entire squad was chuckling and shaking their heads by the time he was done.

"I'd probably have shot you just on principle long before you had a chance to escape." Saunders laughed with the rest.

"Yeah, but that's the beauty of it Sargent." Hitchcock explained. "The captain didn't speak our language very well. He knew what I was saying but he was having trouble understanding it. He got lost in translation, you could say."

"I'd have shot you and then tried to figure it out." Saunders repeated.

"I'll keep that in mind Sargent." The blond returned with a smile. "But I have to admit, it was sort of fun."

"Like I said before," Littlejohn stated to everyone's amusement, "you guys must be nuts."

"Get yourselves something to eat. We leave at first light tomorrow." Lt. Hanley laughed with the others but quickly turned serious. "Be ready when the truck gets here."

"We going to walk again L.T.?" Billy Nelson ask. The others all stopped talking to hear the answer.

"We're taking a truck to their lines and from there we'll be riding in one of their trucks. We have to meet up with a few others when we get there." The lieutenant explained to his men.

"Ours or the underground?" Kirby ask.

"Germans." Hanley answered seriously. "No more questions. We can talk about it tomorrow." He gave them all a look that said the matter was settled. They took the hint and quit asking questions. The meal was eaten and the men settled in for the night. They shared the beer and the Scotch until it was gone. Tully and Hitch kept them entertained with stories from their adventures. The tales got wilder and wilder until Saunders and his men started calling them 'fish tales', stories that grew with each telling. They all laughed at the stories, including the men doing the telling.

Saunders sat back and watched the men enjoying themselves and as they laughed and swapped tales, he worried about the upcoming

mission.

4. Chapter 4

****The Sleeping Beauty Raidâ€"Chapter 4****

The truck arrived and the men packed their gear in the back. Saunders noticed that Troys' men were very careful with their packs. They didn't throw them around, they handled them gently.

They climbed in and sat on the hard seats along the sides. The reality of the situation was starting to sink in at last. On the long ride they had plenty of time to speculate on what they were going to be ask to do.

Kirby glanced at Cage before looking past him to the others. The laughing faces were gone, replaced by the serious expressions of tough, battle hardened soldiers. Kirby had a feeling that things were about to get real.

Once their truck dropped them off, Lt. Hanley led them directly toward a German outpost. They needed a German truck to take them to their final destination, and the outpost boasted just such a truck.

"Make sure they don't get a radio call out." Hanley reminded his men.

"We got it L.T." Saunders acknowledged.

"Need any help with the guards?" Troy appeared beside Saunders. Chip started to refuse before he thought about his last encounter with the four men. Then he hadn't trusted them, now he knew they could take care of themselves.

"Alright Troy. Can your men handle the two outside guards?"

Troy nodded confidently.

"Okay. Your men take care of the guards and my men will deal with the rest of them. Let me know when they're ready."

Troy nodded again and called to his men. The two privates nodded as Troy told them what he wanted. They turned and left before Saunders could say a word. He soon lost sight of them.

Chip organized his men and got them all in position before looking around for Troy.

"Whenever your men are ready Sargent."

"Call me Sam. And they're ready now. Just say the word."

Saunders looked but he didn't see either of the privates. He eyed one of the guards who stood near a shed. He couldn't see how anyone would be able to approach him without being seen. With a nod of his head he gave Troy the go ahead.

Chip watched the guards. One suddenly arched his back and fell

forward, his rifle dropping to the ground. Chip looked for the second one, expecting him to sound the alarm. That guard had dropped his weapon and had both hands covering his face. Chip watched as he fell to his knees and dropped to the ground too. Saunders didn't wait to see if the Germans inside noticed. He urged his men forward, cautioning them to keep down. They moved in on the guard post as quietly as possible.

The first shot came from the German side. One of them spotted the advancing Americans and called the alarm. Saunders and his men had reached shelter by then. The fight was fast and brutal. A bullet clipped the stone next to Cage sending a chip across his cheek. Sawyer fell to his knees as a string of lead whipped over his head. Billy and Littlejohn made their way around the back, cutting off the German escape route. Chip and his men were determined and they had the advantage of surprise. The German soldiers fought to the last man, giving Saunders some tense moments.

As the echo of the last shot faded away, Chip searched for his men, counting them as he spotted each soldier. Satisfied that they were all accounted for, he concentrated on the outpost.

A careful check of the buildings yielded a surprise. Locked in one of the rooms, tied and gagged, they found an American soldier. The man was grateful for the rescue. They couldn't send him back alone and they couldn't spare a man to take him back. Hanley made the decision to take him along.

"The name is Woodrow Melnick. I was with the 2nd platoon, Easy Company. I was on patrol with a buddy when these krauts jumped us. My buddy didn't make it. Sure not sorry to see these guys buy it. I'd have killed them myself if I had had half a chance."

"Take it easy buddy" Saunders cautioned. The other mans' attitude was making him uneasy. "You'll have to come with us, but hear me good. You obey orders and don't go off half-cocked. We have a job to do and you're not going to get in our way."

The other man nodded his understanding.

"Cage, go check out that truck." He watched Melnick as Cage and Kirby ran to the truck. The man seemed content to stay out of the way. The gas tank was full and the truck started easily. Cage found some papers on the front seat and brought them to Hanley.

"The truck's good to go Sir. I found these on the seat." He handed the papers to the lieutenant.

"I'd keep those handy." Jack Moffitt spoke over the officers' shoulder.

Hanley looked up in confusion. "Do you read German too?" Gil knew the sargent spoke German but this was the first that he realized that he could read it too.

"As a matter of fact, I do. Those are travel papers Lieutenant. They'll allow you to pass through any checkpoint in this sector." The British sargent smiled at Hanley. "You never know when they may come in handy."

Hanley smiled and handed the papers to the British sargent. "Use them any way you see fit." With a final look around, he called his men together. "Sargent Saunders. Let's get rolling!"

"Saddle up. Move out."

The men scrambled into the truck for the next leg of their journey. Now they traveled more slowly, alert for enemy activity. It was getting late in the day and they still hadn't reached their destination.

"Where are we going Sarge?" Melnick scooted over next to Saunders and started asking questions.

"Deeper into German territory."

"Where?"

"Does it matter?" Chip pinned the man with a glare. He watched the man for a reaction.

"No." Melnick admitted. "Just as long as I get to kill krauts."

"Can that kind of talk." Saunders ordered gruffly. "We're not here to kill krauts. We have more important things to do."

"More important than killing krauts? What are you guys up to anyway?" Melnick looked from one man to the next. No one answered and he missed the look that passed between the three sergeants.

5. Chapter 5

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 5

"Alright Chip. We need to stop the ambulance. We need it." Troy whispered instructions to Saunders. "Once it stops we have to deal with the driver and crew. You and your men will have to keep them tied up until this operation is over."

` "We have this Sam. Just relax and let us do our job." Saunders sent his men to cover the road, waiting for the ambulance in question. At a sign from Cage, he gave the warning to get ready. When it came into sight it was alone, no escort.

Littlejohn and Billy stepped out into the road and pointed their weapons at the approaching vehicle. Instead of stopping, the driver whipped the wheel, trying to get around the two men. He lost control and the ambulance clipped a tree before sliding down an embankment. It came to rest on its' side.

Littlejohn and Billy were the first ones to reach the wreck. They checked the driver and pronounced him dead. Saunders and Cage were the next to arrive. They checked the back and found the medic crumpled next to the door. As they opened them he tumbled out, lifeless. Saunders crawled in to find two wounded men alive inside.

"Get them out. We need them alive if possible." Troys' voice floated in from outside.

Cage and Kirby helped Saunders lift the wounded men out of the wreckage.

"Lt. Karl Stahl. His father is high up in the Gestapo. The lieutenant here is a national hero. Wounded in combat, been in a coma ever since. The Germans are sending him to their best doctors in Berlin." Troy identified the first injured man. He was young, early twenties, blond and tall. His head was wrapped in gauze, forming a turban. His eyes were closed but Saunders was willing to bet that they were blue.

"Sargent Rutger Wolfe. Another hero. He's on his way to Berlin too. Hitler wants to personally give each of them a medal." This one was older, dark haired and thin. He also had a head injury.

"Okay Jack, you and Hitch get ready." Troy was surveying the damage to the ambulance. "This wasn't what we had in mind but it might actually work better than our original plan."

"How are you going to get your men into the base without the ambulance?" Hanley knew the original plan called for using the ambulance to drive the men to the base.

"We'll let the Germans do it for us Sir. They'll find the wreckage and check it out. They'll find Jack and Hitch in the wreck and take them to the base. We'll just stay around to keep an eye on them until our friends get here." Troy was rummaging through the wreckage for the medical records for the two men. When he found them he crawled back out to wait for Moffitt.

Moffitt returned dressed in a German sergeants uniform. He held several rolls of gauze in his hand.

"Doc, could you wrap my head like this?" He indicated the dark haired German.

"Fix these records Jack. Give the lieutenant a broken arm. Make sure it's his right arm." Troy held the records for Moffitt.

The British sargent pulled a pen from his pocket and made some notations on the proper file. Doc wrapped his head carefully trying to copy the other doctors' work.

Mark Hitchcock appeared next. He was wearing the uniform of a German lieutenant with the right sleeve cut away. He held two pieces of a cast in one hand and several rolls of gauze in the other.

As soon as Doc finished with Moffitt he started to work on the private. As Doc wrapped his head, Moffitt worked on his arm. Moffitt took the cast and fit it over the blonds' right arm up to the shoulder. Using some paste from his pack he glued the two pieces together. Then he wrapped the cast with a layer of gauze. Next he sprinkled the whole thing with a dry powder. Once he wet the gauze the powder made a paste that he smeared to give the gauze a plaster like appearance. When he was finished he had Doc check his work.

"Will it pass inspection?"

"Ought to." Doc nodded thoughtfully. "Why did he need a broken arm anyway?"

Moffitt smiled. "Insurance Doc, insurance."

"Okay Jack. Let's get you two in place. Do you have everything you need?"

"Yeah Sam. We double checked everything."

"Chip, we need to get these two to our truck. Don't let them make any noise." Saunders nodded as Troy issued orders.

They moved the injured men off the stretchers and the stretchers were returned to the ambulance. Hitch crawled onto one and Troy helped him get situated. He watched as Moffitt settled onto the other.

"Sam, put some cuts on our faces. Both of those Germans had cuts from the wreck." Moffitt watched the emotions play across Sams' face. "They don't need to be deep, just a little bloody." He smiled at Troy.

"Alright, but we'd better tie Hitch up, he's not going to be happy."

Tully chuckled at Troys' comment. "Can I do it Sarge?"

"Come on Sarge. You're not going to let Tully do it are you?" Hitch cringed as Tully approached him. "Sarge, have a heart!"

Troy grinned and walked away. "Just remember what they say about paybacks Tully."

"Sam, here's the first dose of the drug for Hitch." Moffitt held a syringe in his hand.

They waited together for the Germans to arrive. The sound of an approaching truck drew their attention.

"Show time." Moffitt looked at Hitch who nodded in return. Troy took the syringe and knelt next to the blond.

"It's not too late to back out."

"I'm okay Sarge. I'm ready." Troy studied the privates face for a moment before he nodded.

"Okay." He slid the needle under the skin and pushed the plunger. Almost immediately Hitchcocks' eyes began to close. He was completely out before Troy had a chance to wish him luck.

"You'd better go Sam." Moffitt watched as Troy gently brushed his finger over the blonds face. "I'll take care of him Sam. I've got his back."

"I know Jack, I know." With a sigh, Troy left without a backward glance.

****The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 6****

Troy and Tully hid in the trees with King Company and watched as a truck full of German soldiers swarmed around the ambulance. Moffitt and Hitch were taken from the ambulance and loaded into the back of the truck.

"Looks like they went for it." Hanley said as they watched the Germans.

"I don't understand." Kirby said as he watched. "How are we going to get them back?"

"The Germans are going to return them. They just don't know it yet." Troy answered quietly. His eyes were still following the departing Germans.

"It's going to be a long night."

Troy looked at the Tully. The lanky Kentuckian had his teeth clamped tightly on the matchstick in his mouth. His eyes glittered with worry as he stared after the departing truck.

"Yeah, it is." Troy agreed.

Hanley and Saunders led their men back to the truck where Sawyer and Melnick were guarding the wounded Germans.

"Everything alright Sawyer?"

Sawyer glanced at Melnick before he answered. "Fine Lieutenant. The prisoners are still unconscious. Everything's quiet here. Did Moffitt and Hitchcock make it off okay?"

Hanley nodded. "Yeah, they did." Hanley eyed Troy and Pettigrew. Both men were trying to appear unconcerned but their eyes told another story. "Let's find a place to camp for the night. At this point all we can do is wait. We should all try to get some rest."

They piled into their truck and moved to a different location. Hanley and Saunders wanted to be away from the accident site.

"Sargent."

Troy was pulled from his thoughts by Saunders. "Yeah, what is it?"

"I was just wondering."

Troy waited.

"How did your private drop that guard back there at the outpost? I know one of them used a knife, but the second one was too far away for a good throw." Saunders had spent most of the day trying to figure that one out.

"Tully's an expert shot with a slingshot." Troy allowed a small smile

to cross his face. "Saved our bacon a time or two. The krauts never expect that."

"A slingshot?" Littlejohn was amazed. "I used to be pretty good with a slingshot."

Tully looked at him silently. He hadn't spoken since they had made camp.

"I grew up on a farm and I used to shoot cans off of a fence with my slingshot. Haven't used one in years." Littlejohn finished wistfully. "Where did you get a slingshot?"

Tully did smile this time. "Sarge made it for me. He used a blown inner tube from the jeep, my shoelace, and the tongue of my boot. Add a hardwood stick and you have it made. Works great."

"You guys really are nuts." Littlejohn repeated.

Tully smiled at the big man, not in the least bit offended.

Billy Nelson moved closer to Tully. "Could you teach me to shoot a slingshot?"

"Sure." Tully shrugged.

"Right now?"

"Sure." Tully shrugged again. He looked to Troy and Saunders for permission. Neither sargent raised an objection. Soon Tully, Littlejohn and Billy were shooting pebbles at tree branches. Littlejohn soon got his old form back and was hitting the target on a regular basis. Billy caught on quick and his aim rapidly improved. Soon he was doing some damage to the branches too. They kept at it until Hanley told them to get some rest.

Troy and Saunders watched the friendly rivalry between the three soldiers.

"I guess I'll have to get them each a slingshot. They certainly could come in handy." Saunders grinned at Troy.

"You'd be surprised." Troy responded. "Sometimes it's that little edge that makes all the difference."

Hanley studied the two sergeants, one dark, one blond, yet so much alike. His thoughts went to Chip and their friendship. They had both lost friends and faced the thought of losing each other. Saunders had gone above and beyond to save his life more than once. He had done the same for the sargent. He tried to imagine how he'd feel if he had to turn his friend over to the Germans. He couldn't picture it. Yet Troy had turned not one, but two, men over to the enemy. He shook his head, maybe Littlejohn had the right idea. He knew Chip had been right in his assessment. This war was crazy!

Hanley went to check on the prisoners. Doc was sitting in the back of the truck monitoring their condition. At the lieutenants' approach, he looked up.

"How are they doing Doc?"

"Not good." Doc shook his head. "The lieutenant is still in a coma. That head wound is beyond me L.T. He may have been hurt in the wreck too." Doc touched the mans' forehead with the back of his hand. "He's running a fever." He checked the second man before he continued. "This one is a bit better."

"Okay Doc, just do your best. We'll get them to a doctor as soon as possible." The lieutenant turned to leave. "And get some rest." When Doc nodded he left to find Sawyer.

Sawyer was wrapped in his blankets underneath the truck.

"Sawyer." The lieutenant called.

"Yeah L.T."

"Tell me what happened back there while you and Melnick were watching the prisoners."

Sawyer hesitated. Realizing they were practically alone, Doc, above them in the truck being the only one near, he answered.

"Melnick wanted to suffocate them both. Said they'd be a whole lot less trouble dead. I had to threaten to shoot him to dissuade him. I really believe he would have done it L.T."

Hanley thanked Sawyer and returned to his own bed. Sleep didn't come easily, he had a lot on his mind.

7. Chapter 7

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 7

The Germans stopped at the crash site and examined the wrecked ambulance. The wounded men were discovered and moved to the back of the truck. The dead they left for the cleanup crew to recover. Medical records and transport orders were collected and handed to the lieutenant in charge. He took one look at them and rushed the wounded men to the base hospital.

"Lt. Stahl is the son of Wilhelm Stahl." The lieutenant offered the papers to his captain. "He and Sgt. Wolfe are being sent to Berlin to meet the High Command personally. It is said that Hitler himself will present them with their medals. I thought that perhaps you would wish to see to their comfort yourself."

"Of course." His captain assured him. "Have them placed in the room directly across from my office. "I can tell the lieutenants' father that I personally had my eye on his son during his stay here."

The lieutenant smiled at his captain. "I thought that you might wish to do so Captain. I have already ordered that room to be prepared for them."

The two men walked to the office window to look into the window across the alley. The hospital building was less than five feet from his office. The room in question was a bustle of activity as orderlies prepared the room for the captains' special guests. They

watched everything as the two wounded heroes were wheeled into the room and made comfortable.

"Unfortunately Sir, the lieutenant has yet to regain consciousness. According to his medical records, he has been in a coma since right after he was injured." The lieutenant indicated the papers that his captain had tossed onto the desk. "Both he and the sargent have head injuries sustained in an explosion. You could however speak with Sgt. Wolfe."

"Yes. Yes. Let them rest first. I'll be by later to pay my respects." The Captain waved his subordinate away. "Take care of their comfort until I can finish my paperwork. These new battle plans must be implemented soon and I must plan my troop movements. Tell the sargent I will stop by later tonight."

The lieutenant saluted and accepted the dismissal. He hurried to the hospital to make sure that everything possible was being done to assure the men were comfortable.

Sgt. Wolfe was still awake when the lieutenant entered the room. The officer introduced himself as he glanced around the room.

"Has the staff given you everything you need Sargent?"

"They've been very kind, thank you." The injured man answered weakly. He hesitated before he continued. "There is one thing Lieutenant."

Eager to be able to offer any help, the lieutenant was quick to ask how he could be of assistance.

"I am very tired but I seem to be having trouble falling asleep. I was wondering if it would be possible for the doctors to give me a pill to help me get to sleep. I wouldn't ask, but I want to be well rested for the ceremony."

The mention of the medal ceremony left the officer with the impression that the sargent expected to be awarded the honor very soon. Understanding the desire to be rested, he assured the sargent that he would inform the doctors of his request. To show his good intentions, he called to a passing nurse and passed on the request. The two men talked quietly. Moffitt, aka Wolfe, feigned interest in the lieutenant to avoid talking himself. He pleaded exhaustion when the officer started to ask questions. While they talked, the pills were delivered to the room.

"Do you really need to sleep now Sargent?"

Moffitt held the pills in his hand and waited to see what the German had in mind. "No, not right now. It can wait until later. But I'm afraid I'm not very good company Lieutenant."

"I'll let you rest Sargent. But Captain Haus will be dropping by after he finishes some important work. You really should try to stay awake until after his visit."

The command was phrased as a suggestion but Moffitt wasn't fooled. He realized that he would have to wait. As he thought about it, he realized that he could turn it to their advantage.

Of course Lieutenant. I will take the pills after the Captain has gone. It will work out well. After the Captain retires I can rest undisturbed until the pills wear off." Moffitt gave a weak looking smile and nodded to himself. " I really must be awake to thank the Captain for his hospitality."

"Very well Sargent, I will let you rest until the Captain arrives." Moffitt thanked him and the lieutenant took his leave.

Moffitt dozed off and on until the Captain arrived. The hospital staff had been over attentive until he had complained that they were keeping him awake. During his talk with the Captain he had again pleaded exhaustion and mentioned the sleeping pills. Before he left the Captain had instructed the staff not to disturb the sargents' sleep.

The sargent made a show of taking the pills just before dark. The staff checked on Hitch, aka Lt. Stahl, before closing the door and leaving them alone. The blond was still not awake. Moffitt slept for several hours before awakening to the quiet hospital. He pulled the sleeping pills out from under his pillow and threw them away. When he glanced out the window, the building next door was completely dark. Climbing slowly to his feet, he moved to the next bed. When he touched the blonds' arm, Hitch opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Ready?"

The blond nodded silently. He sat up in bed and waited quietly. He held out his right arm and Moffitt began to dig at the putty holding the cast together. After a few minutes the cast fell apart in two pieces. Moffitt caught the pieces and handed one to Hitch while he kept the other. Next he dug through some special pockets in the plaster to pull out a set of lock picks and a very small camera.

Hitch, meanwhile, was digging a small gold and jewel encrusted object out of the other half of the cast. He cleaned it carefully and handed it to Moffitt.

The sargent stuffed all the objects in his night shirt. With a nod from him, Hitch moved to the window to check for unwanted eyes. The sargent slowly opened the door to the hall to make sure the staff was respecting his request to not be disturbed. Seeing no one, he hurried to the beds and made human shaped forms under the blankets. On the second bed he left the white of the cast show above the top of the cover. Next he went to the closet and pulled out a stretcher. At a nod from him Hitch eased the window open. The five feet to the other building looked a lot further in the dark. With Hitchcocks' help, He dropped the stretcher from their sill to the window sill across the alley. Moffitt held it steady while the private crawled across the stretcher to the other window. He worked it open and slid inside. Once he was sure he was alone, he returned to the window. He held the stretcher tight as Moffitt made his way across the space.

Next they pulled the stretcher inside so they could close the window and the blackout curtain. Now they were ready to turn on a light and get to work. Moffitt reached into his clothes and pulled out the miniature camera and handed it to Hitch with a nod to the

desk.

Hitch began taking pictures of the maps on the walls and any papers he could find. Since he couldn't read German he took pictures of everything. He was careful to replace all the papers exactly as he found them.

Moffitt scanned the room and found a locked cabinet. It took him several minutes but the lock finally clicked open. Inside sat a small gold object, almost exactly like the one they had brought with them. The main difference, this was gold and gems while the one they'd brought was a lead and paint replica. The sargent switched the two objects and relocked the cabinet. He checked to be sure he had not disturbed anything else. Satisfied, he turned to help the blond.

Hitch was almost done so Moffitt kept watch until he was finished. They turned out the lights and pulled the blackout curtain away from the window. Hitch opened the window so they could cross the space again by reversing their previous actions.

The blond closed the office window before sliding backwards toward the hospital. The stretcher shifted under his weight and he threw a startled look over his shoulder at the sargent.

Moffitt smiled an apology and gripped the ends tighter. Hitch slid into the hospital room with a barely suppressed sigh of relief.

They closed the window and Hitch put the stretcher in the closet while Moffitt checked the hall.

The staff was still avoiding the hallway outside their door. This gave them time to finish their preparations for their deception.

Moffitt handed the gold artifact to Hitch who placed it into the pocket in the cast that had held the replica. The lock picks and the camera were replaced in their special pockets too. Moffitt pulled a small packet of putty and powder out of another pocket. He replaced the cast on the blonds right arm and fitted the pieces together. Using the putty he glued the pieces in position. Next he wrapped the whole thing with gauze and made a paste with the powder to smooth out the final appearance. They inspected their creation critically.

"I guess it will do." Moffitt murmured with a bit of doubt.

"It looks good to me." Hitch confirmed. He sat on his bed and watched his sargent.

"Are you ready Hitch?" Moffitt looked into the blonds' wary eyes and tried to sound confident. "This will be the last time Hitch. You can stay awake after this one wears off."

The private nodded but his eyes were locked on the syringe that Moffitt held. The sargent slid the needle under the skin and pushed the plunger. He helped Hitch lay down as the drug took effect. As the blue eyes slid shut Moffitt squeezed his arm in reassurance. Hitch relaxed until he appeared to be in a coma. Moffitt pulled the blankets up around his shoulders and tucked them in with a gentle touch.

"Sleep well my friend. I've got your back."

The sargent returned to his own bed and fell into a troubled sleep.

8. Chapter 8

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 8

"Thank you for everything Captain." Moffitt, as Wolfe, was being loaded into the back of a truck. He smiled as the Captain fussed over Hitchcock, as Stahl. They loaded the second stretcher just as carefully. "I will be sure to tell the lieutenants' father how kind you have been."

"I'm sorry we do not have another ambulance to lend you. I hope the truck will be comfortable."

"I'm sure that the truck will be fine." Moffitt assured him.

With a rattle of the engine and puffs of smoke, the truck left the base on the next leg of their trip. As they headed deeper into German held territory the driver began to relax. The further they traveled the safer he felt. The road began to climb a rocky hill with trees on both sides. The sun flickered on the windshield as leaves blocked it in patches, occasionally seriously impairing his vision. Still, he had a schedule to keep and the captain would not be happy if he were to run late. He kept his foot pressed to the gas pedal as the vehicle skidded on the loose gravel. He took his eyes from the road for just a moment to look at something that caught his eye. To his surprise, when he looked back, there were American soldiers standing in the road. He jerked on the wheel as bullets shattered the windshield and pounded into his body. The truck veered off the road and slammed grill first into a large boulder before flying sideways. The left side of the vehicle collided with another rock with a sickening crunch.

"What are you doing?" Kirby screamed at Woodrow Melnick even as he ran toward the crumpled vehicle. He could still hear things falling in the rear. The solid thump of something moving made his heart sink. Kirby was the first to reach the rear doors. He ripped them open before anyone else arrived.

Sgt. Jack Moffitt slid across the fallen objects trying to reach Mark Hitchcock. The violent collision had thrown them both forward, banging their heads. The second impact had hit next to the unconscious private. They had been tossed about in the rear like rag dolls. Mark had landed on the floor under the flood of falling objects.

When the doors were ripped open, Jack spun to face the threat. The sudden movement made his head spin. His vision greyed and his stomach did a flip. Fighting the nausea, he tried to identify the person standing in the door.

"It's okay Sargent, we're going to get you out." Kirby reached for the door frame. A hand grabbed his arm and pulled him roughly away from the opening. He fell back as Sam Troy jumped into the back of

the wreckage.

"Jack! Hitch!"

Moffitt tried to tell Sam to check on Hitch but his mouth wouldn't work. The light faded and he lost consciousness before he could tell Troy what he wanted. He never felt the hands that pulled him out of the truck and carried him to a soft bed of moss inside the tree line. He couldn't hear the muttered curses as they administered first aid as others went back for Mark Hitchcock. He wasn't aware of them placing the young private on the ground next to him.

"Be careful!" Doc cautioned urgently. "That last impact hit awful close to him." He hovered over the private as he was lowered to the ground.

"How are they Doc?"

Doc never looked up from his patients. His fingers gently probed arms and legs looking for broken bones. The open wounds he found were superficial. It was a fear of internal bleeding that kept him silent.

Sam Troy stepped away to give the medic room to work. Worry lined his face. Unable to stand still and do nothing, he turned toward Chip Saunders. "What happened? I thought we were just going to stop it."

Saunders held his tongue at the accusation. He waited to let the other sargent get it out of his system. The rest of the squad kept quiet. Only Melnick was fool enough to open his mouth.

"We did stop them Sargent. They aren't going anywhere." His broad smile was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Troy exploded.

"Are you the one who fired those shots?"

Melnick nodded. Before his head stopped moving he found his throat held in a vise-like grip. His air was being cut off as Troys' furious eyes stared into his from only inches away.

"I ought to kill you where you stand!" The sargent snarled with barely controlled fury. "My men were in that truck!"

Melnick struggled for air as hands grabbed Sam Troy and pulled him away.

"He tried to kill me!" Melnick croaked to the others who stood around watching.

Hanley and Saunders were talking urgently to Troy as they held him in place. Pettigrew stood behind the three men glaring at Melnick with cold eyes.

"We didn't see a thing." Kirby told Melnick. "All I saw was you disobeying orders and almost killing his men. The very men we're supposed to be helping." Kirby spat on the ground at the others' feet before walking away.

Cage glared at Melnick and followed Kirby without a word. Littlejohn and Billy stared at the offending soldier with disgust. Neither spoke as he turned to them for support.

"Sawyer, you saw it." Melnick called to the final witness.

Sawyer shook his head. "I was there when you wanted to kill two wounded prisoners. You don't want headquarters asking me any questions." Ignoring the others' protests, he joined Cage and Kirby.

Seeing Sawyer leave, Billy and Littlejohn walked away too. Melnick was left standing alone. He was still standing there looking after the others when Saunders approached him.

"You saw it Sarge! You have to report him!"

Saunders kept walking until he was almost nose to nose with Melnick. "You're lucky I don't let him finish what he started." Saunders kept his voice low, not trying to hide his anger. "Let's get one thing straight here Melnick. Stay away from him and his men. Hell, for that matter, stay away from me and mine." He glared at the enlisted man. "If I ever see you do something like that again," he paused to make his point, "I'll shoot you myself. You're not going to get anyone killed on my watch." Without waiting for an answer, he walked away too.

The squad formed around Doc and watched as he finished his exams.

"I think we can move them now." Doc announced. "We're going to need stretchers. We'll have to be careful how we move them."

"Can they take the travel in the truck?" Gil Hanley wanted to be on the move but he wasn't willing to risk the lives of the men.

Doc nodded slowly. "I think so. The sargent is badly bruised and I had to immobilize his shoulder. I don't think he has a concussion but he did get a pretty good bump on the head." Doc looked up at Troy. "I think he's going to be alright Sargent. He won't be able to walk out of here though."

Troy nodded, his eyes locked on his men.

"Private Hitchcock is another story."

Troys' head snapped up and he met Docs' worried eyes.

"He may have a concussion. His leg is swollen to twice its' normal size. I didn't find a break but I can't rule it out. The thing that worries me is his ribs. At least three are broken. There may be internal bleeding but I can't tell for sure."

"Will he make it?"

Doc shrugged. "I don't know. All I can say is, get him to a doctor as soon as possible. I'll do all I can for him until then."

Troys eyes were haunted as he looked down at his men. "Chip, Lieutenant, are we ready to go?" He raised his eyes to the two men.

They both nodded.

"Tully. We're going to get Jack and Hitch to the truck. Give us ten minutes then blow up the wreck. Make it look like it crashed and the gas tank exploded. Let them think that the truck was the target. We don't want them knowing they've been duped."

Tully nodded that he understood. He watched them carry the wounded men toward where they had left their truck. Ten minutes later there was an explosion followed by a fire spewing thick smoke into the sky. Two minutes later Tully hopped into the back of the truck.

9. Chapter 9

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 9

"How are they Doc?" Hanley knelt on the floor next to Doc and ask the question quietly. They'd been on the road for over an hour and most of the squad had fallen asleep.

"Holding on Lieutenant. The sargent seems to be breathing easier." Doc checked the pulse of his patients again. The rough road made it difficult to do anything for the injured men without causing them discomfort. He had to fight to keep his balance in the rolling truck.

"What about your German patients?"

"They're holding on too. So far so good Lieutenant."

"Another couple of hours should see us home. Just do your best." Hanley tried to reassure the medic. Tired, the lieutenant found a seat on the hard bench and leaned on the canvas behind his back and head. The mission was over, all they had to do was get home. 'Yeah, that's all.' He thought to himself.

"Hey L.T." Saunders called from the cab of the truck. " We're coming up on out meet point. The underground should be here by now."

"Okay Sargent. Just follow procedure."

The sargent had the driver stop the truck and flick the lights. They waited impatiently for someone to contact them. When a civilian walked out into the road, Saunders went to meet him. They talked for a minute before they headed to the tailgate of the waiting truck.

"Sargent Troy."

Troy crawled over the tailgate to talk to the two men. The brief conversation was hushed. Troy apparently convinced the man that all was well because he was handed a folded stack of papers. When the meeting was over, Troy turned to Hanley.

"These, Lieutenant, are the locations of every outpost and roadblock between us and home. We should be able to get around most of them. There is one that might be a problem though."

Hanley took the papers gratefully. "We can make good time if we can get around them. I hope you thanked them."

Troy nodded. "We did a little job for them on this mission. The Germans took an artifact from one of the local churches. A valuable and irreplaceable object. We got it back."

The lieutenant handed the papers to Saunders. "Make good use of these Sargent."

"We'll do our best." Saunders smiled. His shoulders slumped with exhaustion but there was a new spring in his step.

"Sam." Moffitts' weak voice barely carried over the racket of the truck.

"I'm here Jack." Troy gripped the hand of his friend as he knelt next to him.

"How's Hitch?"

"Still out. Doc is keeping a close eye on him."

Moffitt tried to sit up.

"No, stay down." Troy pushed him down on the floor.

"We go it. We got it all." The Brit rolled his head to locate the blond. He found him on the other side of the truck with Tully sitting beside him. "Hitch did a great job. You should be proud of him." Moffitts' eyes rolled back and his head rolled to the side.

"I am Jack. I'm proud of both of you." Troy whispered to his unconscious friend.

They rode in silence as the truck carried them closer and closer to their own lines. Occasionally they would take a side road to get around a roadblock or an outpost. Hanley was starting to think that they may have missed them all when Saunders called to him again.

"Lieutenant, we have a roadblock coming up. There isn't any way to miss this one. We're going to have to crash it."

"No!" Hanley responded. "It's too dangerous. They have an outpost close to here. If they hear the shooting they'll be on to us. We can't outrun them without putting our wounded at risk. There has to be a way to do this without shooting."

Saunders looked at Pettigrew. "Maybe there is, Lieutenant, maybe there is." They pulled the truck off the road and into the trees. "Maybe Sargent Troy could help."

Troy was puzzled but he nodded without hesitation.

"We're going to make some slingshots." Saunders held up some long pieces of rubber inner tube. He smiled mischievously. "I took it from the wrecked truck. Care to help Sargent?"

Using the materials on hand, they made two slingshots, one for Billy

and one for Littlejohn.

"Do you have enough material to make a few more?" Cage and Kirby had watched the proceedings with interest. Not wanting to be left out, they decided that they needed slingshots too.

They made two more.

Saunders led his men toward the roadblock. They carried knives and slingshots and pockets full of pebbles. Before they moved in Saunders warned his men of some possible problems.

"Troy warned me that you cannot shoot through helmets. The slingshots are not powerful enough. You need a killing shot. You need to take them by surprise. Once we lose that advantage they have the edge."

The men listened and took the advice to heart. It was a determined group of men who followed their sargent into battle. As they moved into position, Tully Pettigrew joined them. With acknowledgements all around, they went to wage a primitive war.

Picking off those least likely to be missed first, they took them out one by one. To try to prevent a miss, they doubled up on each target. Each shot was taken from as close as possible. The tactics worked. They took the entire German staff by stealth and cunning without raising one alarm.

They finished checking for survivors. Saunders sent someone to destroy the radio. Kirby and Sawyer returned with three wounded Germans. Doc patched them up and they were prodded to the truck.

Saunders was smiling at their success as he approached the truck.

"Where's Melnick?" Cage was looking around for the other man.

"I haven't seen him." Billy answered.

"He was behind me when we headed for the outpost." Littlejohn added. "But he didn't have a slingshot so he couldn't take part in the attack."

"I saw him drop behind us as we moved in." Everyone turned to Kirby.

"When?" Saunders snapped.

"Before we moved in." Kirby repeated.

"Then where is he now?" Hanley ask.

Saunders spun and stalked to the truck. At the tailgate he pulled the canvas aside and peered in. With a curse he climbed into the rear of the truck. The others looked in to see Melnick sprawled unconscious on the floor between Hitchcock and Moffitt. Moffitt held a pistol pointed at him.

Saunders took the pistol from his shaking hand and patted him on the

shoulder.

"What happened?"

"He tried to kill Hitch. I woke up and he was trying to suffocate him." Moffitt looked ready to drop. I managed to knock him out." The Brit smiled weakly. "I'm glad you showed up. I'm afraid I'm no match for him right now."

Saunders turned to his men and in a cold voice he began giving orders. "Tie him up. Make sure it's good and tight. Doc, check on Hitchcock." He moved out of the way so Kirby and Sawyer could reach Melnick.

Melnick was roughly pulled out of the truck, bound, and thrown back in. The hands that helped him were none too gentle. The new wounded German prisoners were helped into the back with more care than Melnick received.

Chip debated putting Troy and Pettigrew in the cab to avoid any trouble with Melnick. Both men looked ready to commit murder themselves.

"Hitchcock is alright Sarge. Mofitt must have woke up just in time." Doc finished checking the private. Concerned for the first two wounded Germans, he checked them too.

"Are they okay?" Hanley shared the medics' concern.

"Yes Sir, but there are fresh bruises on the Lieutenants' face. Melnick must have tried to kill him too." Doc pointed out the bruises.

"Maybe Hitchcock saw him and he decided to get rid of the witness." Sawyer suggested. "He tried to get me to promise not to tell headquarters that he wanted to kill them earlier."

"We'll turn him over to the MPs and tell them what happened." The lieutenant glanced around at his men. "Let them deal with him."

"Can we shoot him if he tries something?" Littlejohn, a little too eager, ask for all of them.

"Only if he tries something." Hanley stressed. He looked at the faces around him and realized that to a man they were hoping Melnick would make a wrong move.

10. Chapter 10

The Sleeping Beauty Raid-Chapter 10

King Company and the Rat Patrol were met at headquarters by the officers who had sent them on the mission. Saunders had wanted to stop at the aid station and drop of their wounded but their escort had insisted that they go straight to headquarters.

"Sirs." Lt. Hanley jumped from the truck as soon as it rolled to a stop. "We have wounded. We'd like to get them to a doctor as soon as possible."

"We're aware of that Lieutenant but the completion of this mission is of the utmost importance. Once that is done your men are free to go to the aid station."

"What about our prisoners? We have five wounded Germans and one of ours who tried to commit murder."

"What's that about Lieutenant?"

"We rescued him from the Germans and we had to take him along because we couldn't spare anyone to take him back. He tried to suffocate one of the prisoners and one of Sargent Troys' men."

The officers exchanged startled looks.

"We'll have the MPs take them off your hands. All of them." They called for some MPs and the prisoners were taken away.

"Sargent Troy, were you successful?"

Troy nodded. "Yes Sir. We got it all."

Hitchcock was moved to the tailgate where Troy proceeded to cut the cast off his arm. He pulled the two pieces apart and began to dig open the hidden pockets. First he pulled out the small gold cross that glittered with precious gems. He handed it to the nearest officer. "Our part for the underground." Then he pulled out the small camera and handed that to them. "The battle plans and maps. I believe you will find it all there. To the best of our knowledge, the Germans don't suspect a thing."

The officers were smiling with pleasure.

"Very good sargent. I expect a full written report on my desk within the hour."

"Yes Sir." Troy didn't look happy about the time constraint.

"Dismissed Sargent. You may take your men to see a doctor now."

"Yes Sir."

"Lt. Hanley, we would like you to give us a briefing on the mission right now. Your men may go."

"Yes Sir." Gil dismissed his men who stayed with the truck and rode to the aid station with Hitchcock and Moffitt. When Gil finished his briefing and was dismissed he headed straight there himself. He met Troy on the way. "Finished with your report already?"

"Figured I may as well get it done. Hitch is in surgery. He had internal bleeding. I figure I'd get this done and be back before he wakes up." Troy paused as if unsure of himself. "Lieutenant, I'd like to thank you. You and your men have gone way above and beyond to be of help. I appreciate your concern for my men."

"Glad to help Sargent. I think first squad has sort of adopted you and your men."

Troy nodded and continued on his way. Gil watched him disappear before he headed for the aid station again.

Saunders and Troy were standing outside of the aid station the next afternoon when first squad arrived. Saunders eyed them with amusement. "Just what are you guys up to?"

"We come to check on Moffitt and Hitchcock." Littlejohn explained. "We wanted to know how they're doing?"

"They're going to be fine." Troy told them with a smile. "Hitch woke up a little bit ago. Moffitt woke up this morning."

The men shuffle their feet self-consciously as they nodded at the news.

"Why don't you go on in and see them? Tully is with them now. He could probably use a break." Troy suggested.

Littlejohn smiled happily. He nodded to the others. "Let's give Tully a break. I bet he's tired of sitting in there all the time."

"I wouldn't doubt it a bit." Saunders agreed. "You guys would be doing him a favor."

Billy led the way, followed by the others. Saunders and Troy smiled at their backs. They each smoked a cigarette before going back inside. The entire squad was standing around the two beds laughing at something.

"Well all I know is that every time we see you, you're sleeping." Kirby was saying to Hitchcock.

"But we brought beer." Hitchcock protested.

"Tell you what," Saunders said as he and Troy walked up to them, "the next time the beer is on us."

End
file.